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KNUCKLES™



THE ECHIDNA



DIRECT EDITION

GALÁN
PENDERS

KNUCKLES™

BOOK TWENTY-EIGHT THE FIRST DATE

PART THREE OF THREE

KEN PENDERS

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BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL AGAINST THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN FROM WITHIN!

ARCHIE COMICS AND SEGA PRESENT... KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!

Our story thus far...

Just when Knuckles thought he had things figured out, he finds himself back to square one. After asking Julie-Su out on a date, Knuckles has no idea where to take her or even what to do. But when there are no plans made, no one comes up with them quite like a woman can...

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IT'S JULIE-SU, MOM!

I ASKED HER OUT ON A DATE--

--AND IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO ME UNTIL THIS MORNING THAT I REALIZED I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT GOING ON A DATE!

SO I FIGURED I'D ASK YOU!



WHAT DO YOU DO ON A DATE?

MOSTLY YOU SPEND TIME GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER!

LIKE HOW? WHAT DID YOU AND DAD DO?



YOUR FATHER TOOK ME ON A PICNIC!

A PICNIC?

YES! HE PREPARED EVERYTHING! HE EVEN READ ME SOME OF HIS POETRY!



POETRY? FROM DAD?!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YES, AND HE WAS WONDERFUL!

WHEN IS THIS DATE, BY THE WAY?

THIS FRIDAY!



THIS FRIDAY?

OH, NO! THIS WILL RUIN THE SURPRISE IF HE GOES OUT THAT NIGHT!

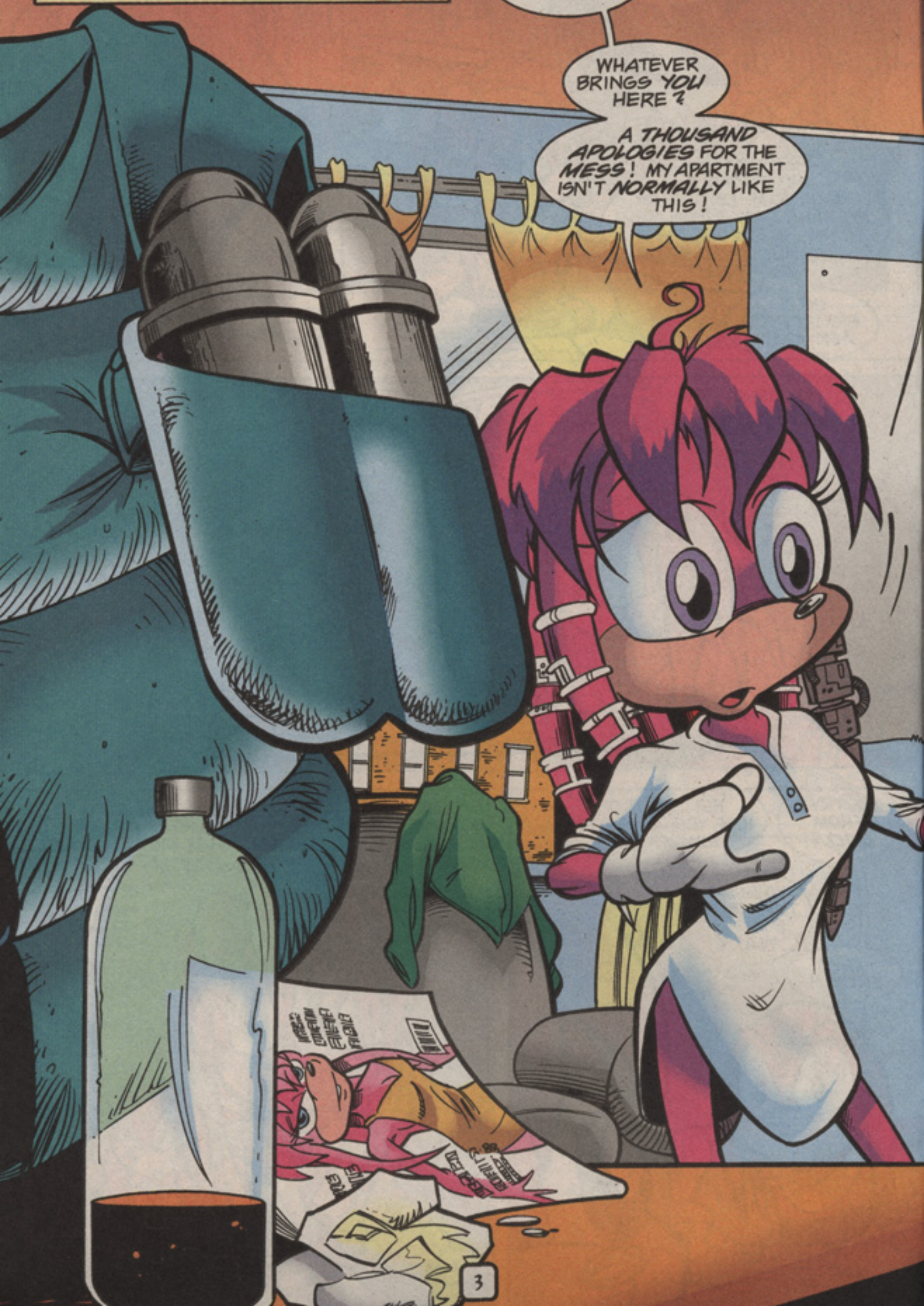
ON THE OTHER HAND--

"--IT COULD VERY LIKELY BE THE *BEST*
WAY TO KILL *TWO* BIRDS WITH *ONE*
STONE--PROVIDED SOMEONE *ELSE*
IS *AGREEABLE* WITH MY SUGGESTION!"

LADY
LARA LE?!!

WHATEVER
BRINGS YOU
HERE?

A THOUSAND
APOLOGIES FOR THE
MESS! MY APARTMENT
ISN'T *NORMALLY* LIKE
THIS!



CAN I
GET YOU A
DRINK?

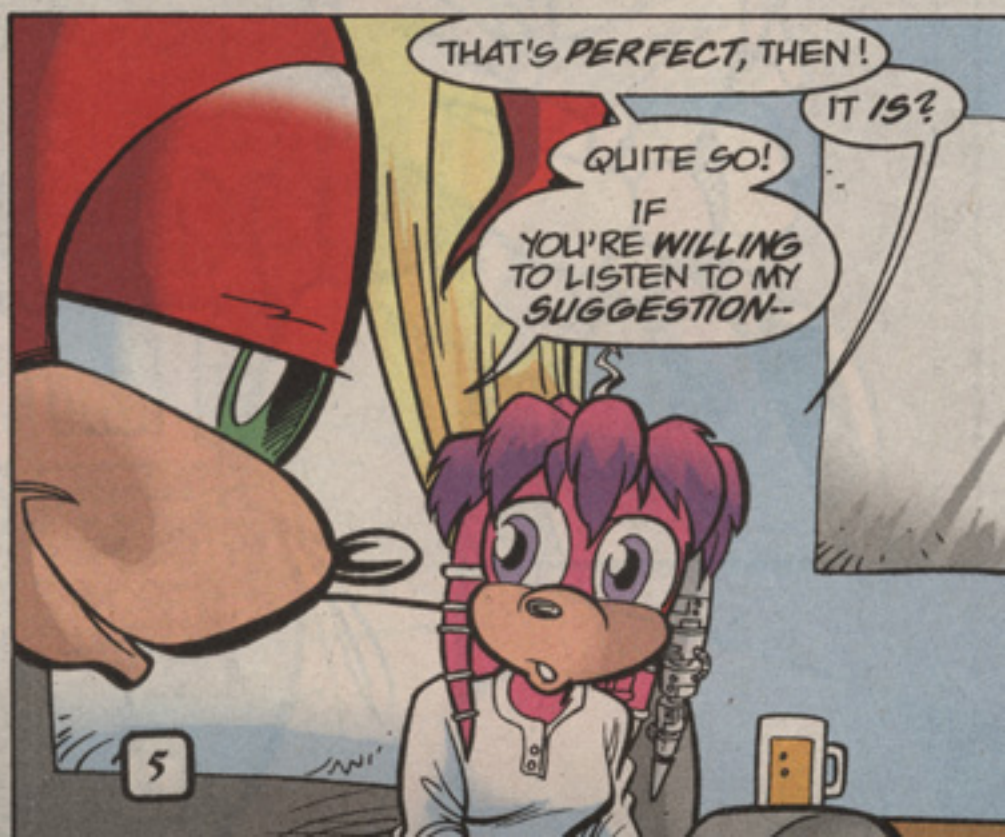
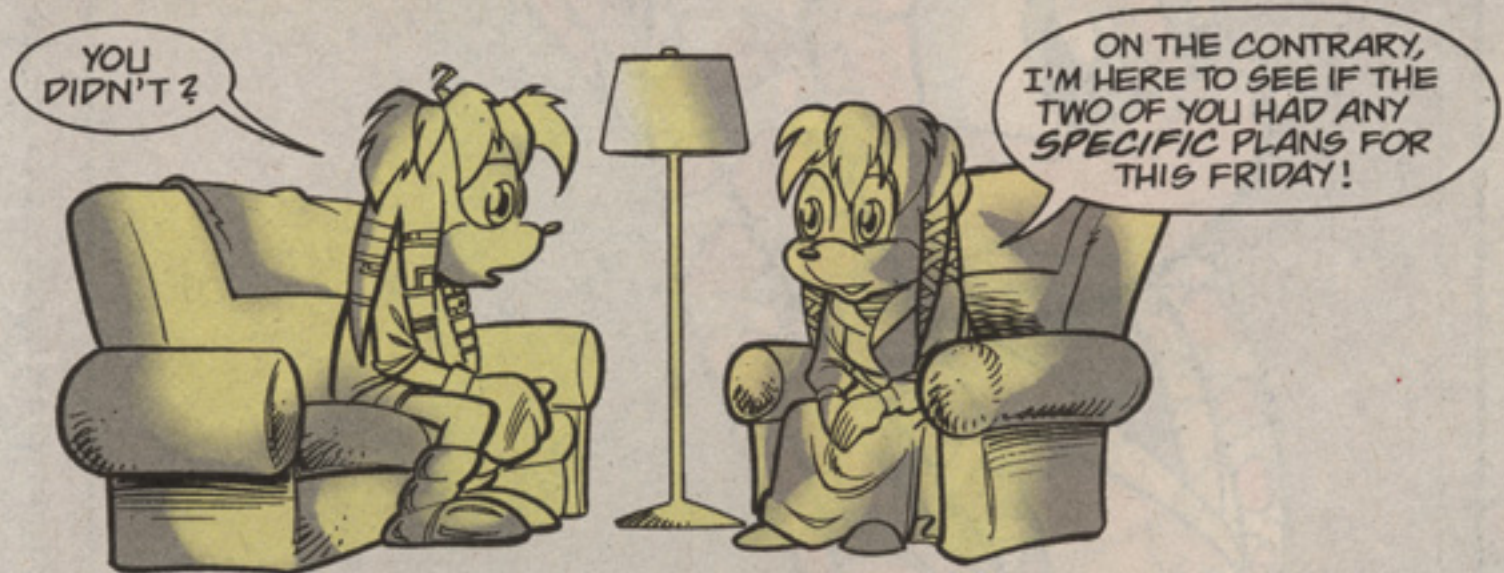
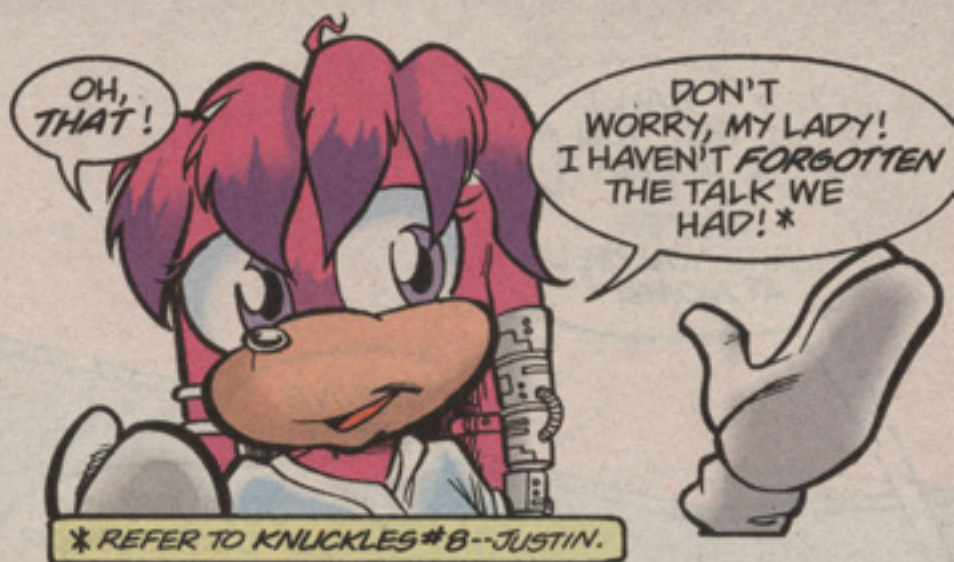
PLEASE
MAKE YOURSELF
AT HOME!

I'M FINE,
JULIE-SU!

JUST RELAX
AND TAKE A DEEP
BREATH--

-- AS WE
NEED TO
TALK!

IT COULD BE
LOVE
(I SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN BETTER)



"—THIS IS SURE TO BE ONE DATE
MY SON WON'T EVER FORGET!"

WHAT'S
WRONG, VEC? I MEAN
I FEEL BAD THAT CHARMY
CAN'T MAKE IT TO KNUX'S
BIG DAY, BUT I'M NOT
LETTING THAT GET
ME DOWN.

IT'S NOT THAT.
IT'S ABOUT KNUX.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE MY OWN
BUDSMAN WOULD
TRASH ME LIKE
THAT!*

*SEE LAST ISSUE
—THE EDITOR.

YOU'RE LUCKY
KNUCKLES DIDN'T
RIP YOUR HEAD OFF,
VECTOR!

AND YOU'D
HAVE DESERVED
IT, TOO!

WHAT'S WITH
YOU AND JULIE-SU,
ANYWAY?

IT'S NOT LIKE
SHE HAS TO GO OUT OF
HER WAY TO ANNOY
YOU, VECTOR!

WE'RE LIKE OIL AND
WATER, MIGHTY—

—A BAAAAAD
COMBINATION!

I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT
OTHER THAN SHE RUBS ME
THE WRONG WAY!

YOU'RE NOT THE
EASIEST GUY TO GET ALONG
WITH, EITHER, VECTOR!

MY FRIENDS
ARE CONSTANTLY ASKING
ME WHY I EVEN HANG
OUT WITH YOU!

WHAT
ABOUT YOU,
MIGHTY?

I JUST WANT
EVERYONE TO
GET
ALONG!

THAT ALSO
INCLUDES BEING COOL
WITH JULIE-SU!

WHY
NOT?

BREAKING UP THE GANG
IS ONE RAP I DON'T NEED
HANGING OVER MY HEAD!

ME
NEITHER!

HUH?!

COMING



SOON!

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KNUCKLES!

YOU WERE EXPECTING MAYBE SONIC?

AS IF!

LISTEN--

--I WAS WAAAY OUTTA LINE LAST TIME!

EVEN IF YOU WEREN'T AROUND, I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID WHAT I SAID!

MAYBE I WAS QUICK TO JUMP THE GUN, AS WELL!

WE SQUARE THEN?

YEAH, VECTOR--

WE'RE SQUARE!

ALLLLLLL-RIIIIGHT!!!

LEGGO, MIGHTY!

THIS IS DOWNRIGHT EMBARRASSING!

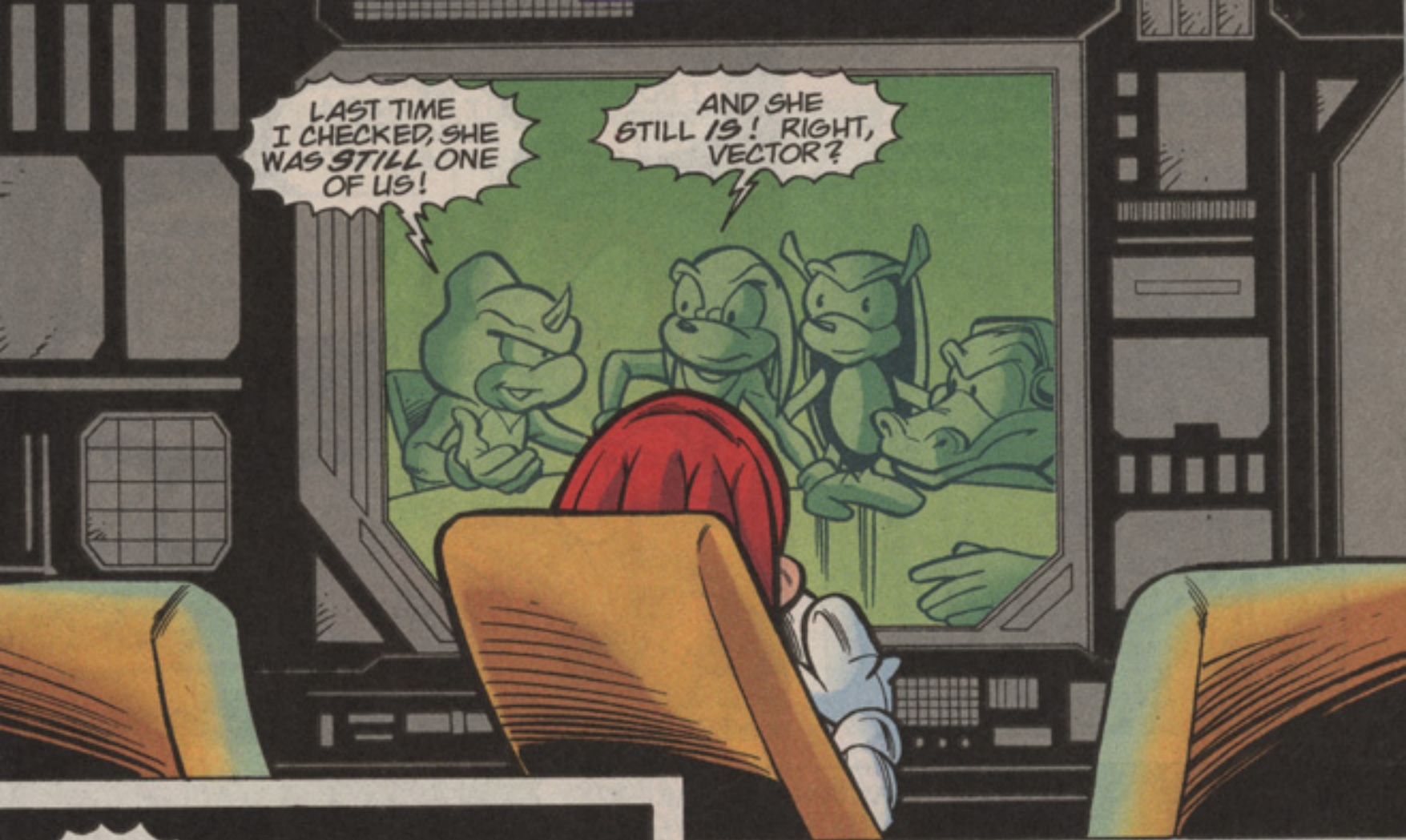
HOW ABOUT A SOFT LANDING, YA' DILLO!!

YAAAY!

IT'S ABOUT TIME WE QUIT BICKERING AMONG OURSELVES!

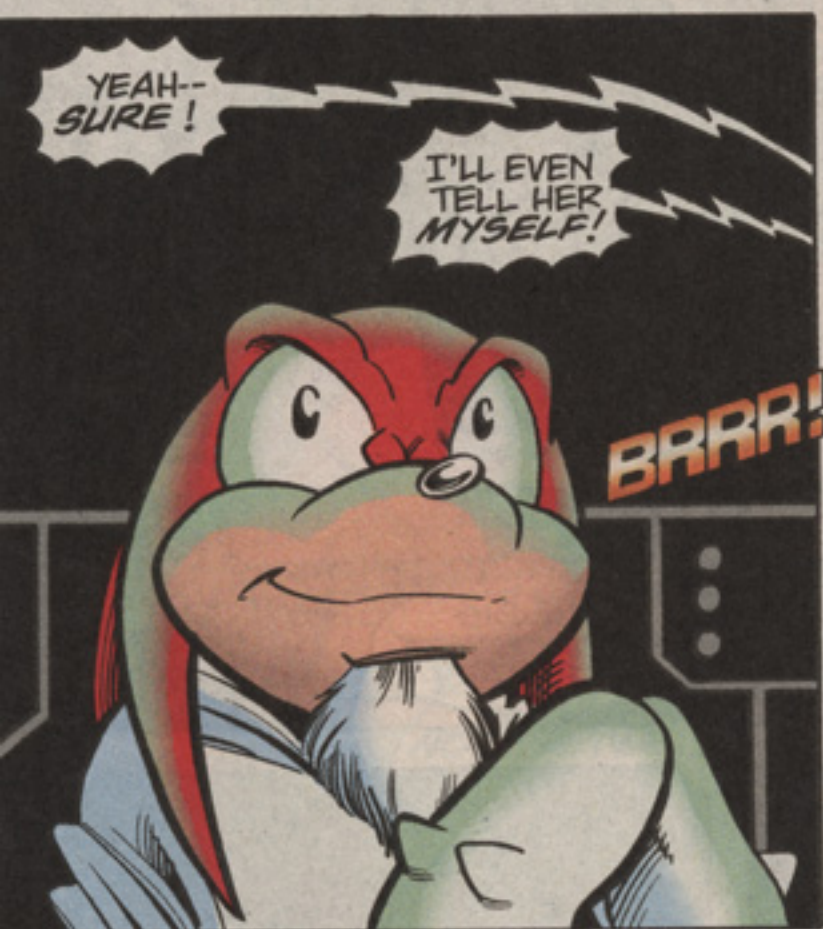
AREN'T WE FORGETTING SOMEONE, GUYS?

WHAT ABOUT JULIE-SU?



LAST TIME
I CHECKED, SHE
WAS *STILL* ONE
OF US!

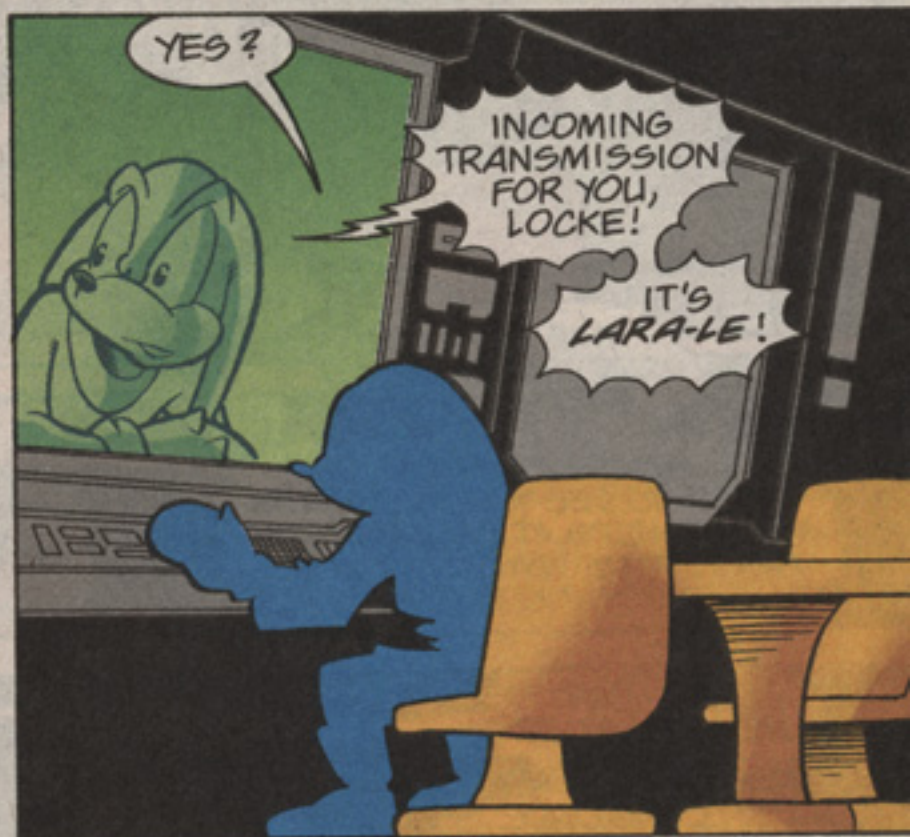
AND SHE
STILL IS! RIGHT,
VECTOR?



YEAH--
SURE!

I'LL EVEN
TELL HER
MYSELF!

BRRR!



YES?

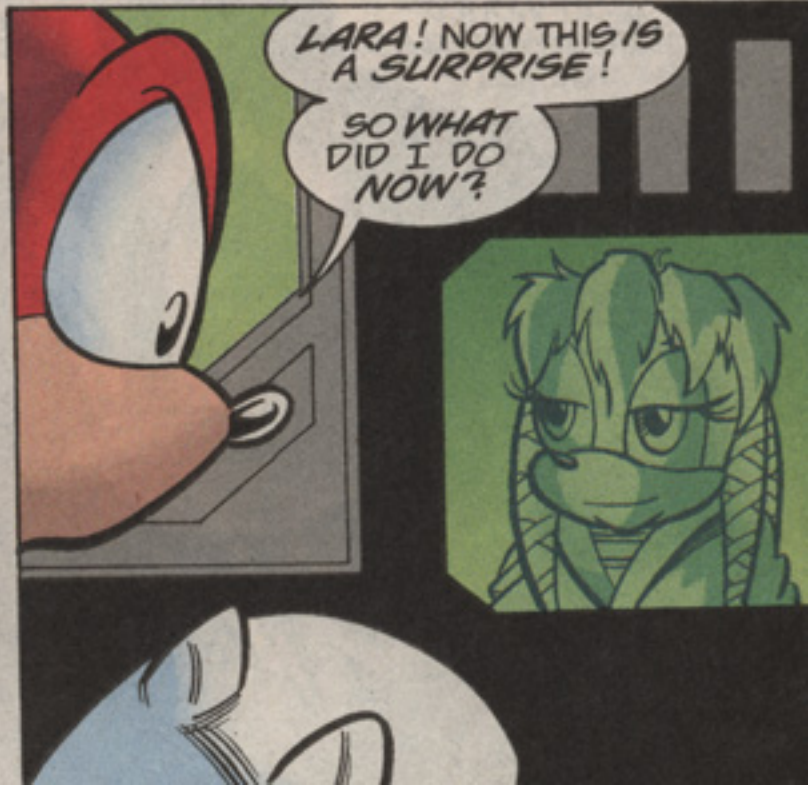
INCOMING
TRANSMISSION
FOR YOU,
LOCKE!

IT'S
LARA-LE!



PATCH IT
THROUGH,
DEO!

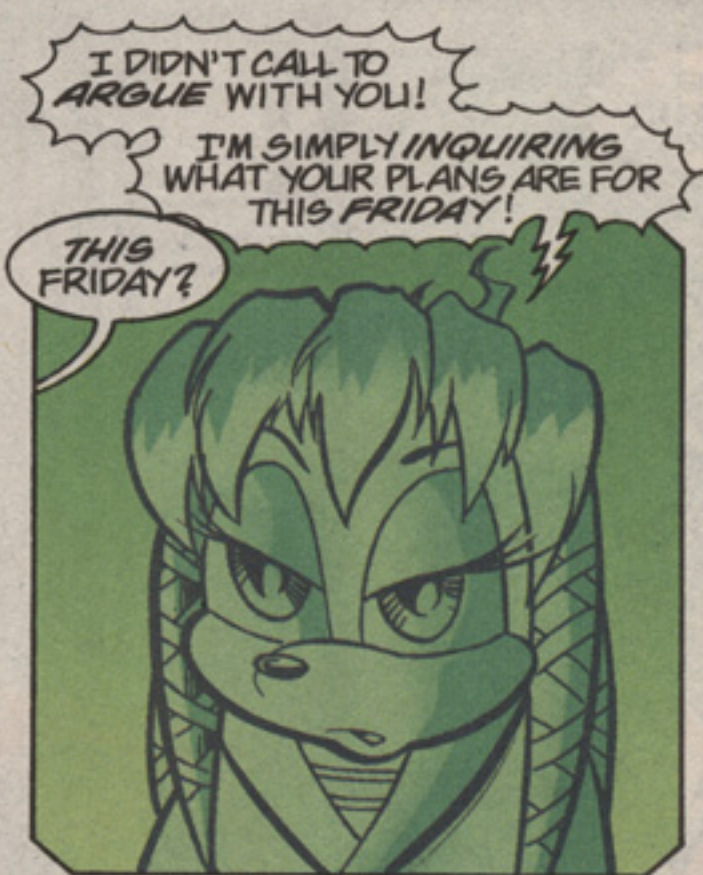
ACKNOWLEDGED!



LARA! NOW THIS IS
A SURPRISE!

SO WHAT
DID I DO
NOW?





I DIDN'T CALL TO ARGUE WITH YOU!

I'M SIMPLY INQUIRING WHAT YOUR PLANS ARE FOR THIS FRIDAY!

THIS FRIDAY?

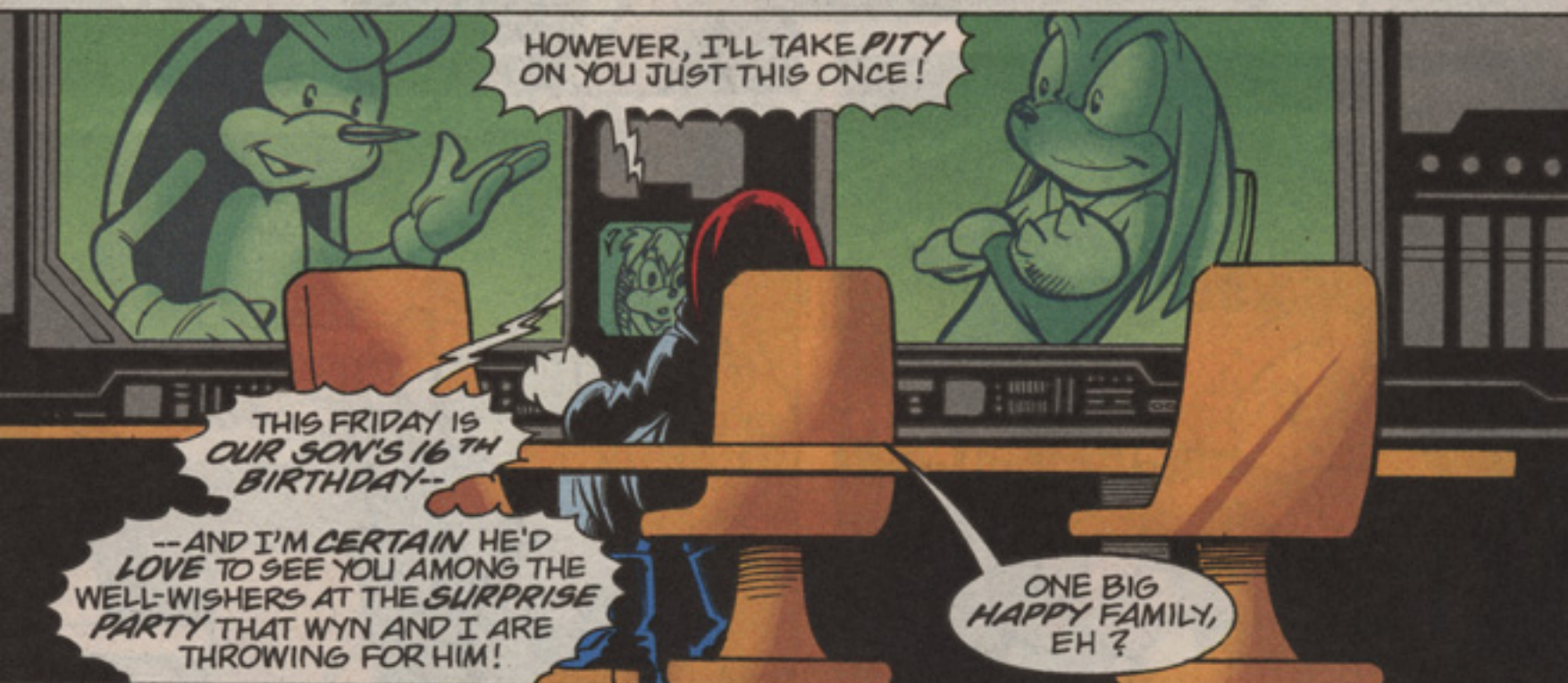


I DON'T KNOW!

I POSTED A REMINDER TO MYSELF ABOUT IT--

--BUT I FORGOT WHAT IT WAS I WAS REMINDING MYSELF ABOUT!

THAT SOUNDS LIKE PAR FOR THE COURSE.



HOWEVER, I'LL TAKE PITY ON YOU JUST THIS ONCE!

THIS FRIDAY IS OUR SON'S 16TH BIRTHDAY--

--AND I'M CERTAIN HE'D LOVE TO SEE YOU AMONG THE WELL-WISHERS AT THE SURPRISE PARTY THAT WYN AND I ARE THROWING FOR HIM!

ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY, EH?



LOOK--CAN WE BE CIVIL OR WHAT?

I WAS ONLY THINKING ABOUT WHAT WOULD MAKE KNUCKLES HAPPY!

YOU'RE RIGHT--

--AND I'M SORRY!



SO, HOW CAN I HELP OUT?

"NOW THAT YOU MENTION
IT, WHEN THE **BIG DAY**
ARRIVES..."

MY!
AREN'T WE
PRETTY!



ARCHY!!

I THOUGHT
YOU RETURNED
TO HAVEN!



I POPPED IN
TO WISH YOU WELL,
M'BOY!

Y'KNOW,
GO **BREAK**
A LEG---



GO HAVE MY
HEAD EXAMINED IS
MORE LIKE IT!

WHAT AM I
DOING?

NOW IS
NOT THE TIME
FOR **SECOND**
THOUGHTS,
LAD!

FAINT
OF HEART
NE'ER WON
OVER FAIR
MAIDEN!



ON THE OTHER
HAND, EVER **CONSIDER**
THE NOTION THAT **DATING**
IS MORE **TROUBLE** THAN
IT'S WORTH?



"LET'S SEE IF YOU STILL
FEEL THAT WAY AFTER
ALL IS SAID AND DONE!"

RIIING!

HI,
KNUCKLES!

I'LL
BE DOWN IN A
MINUTE!

NO
PROBLEM!

WHAT'S
A MINUTE OR
TWO BETWEEN
FRIENDS?

GET A GRIP ON
YOURSELF, GIRL!

YOU KNOW
WHAT NEEDS TO
BE DONE!

YOU ALL SET,
JULIE-SU?

NEVER
READIER!

OKAY, THEN,
LET'S GO!

BEFORE
WE DO--

IT'S
ONLY THOSE
UNPLANNED
MOMENTS YOU
HAVEN'T A CLUE
ABOUT!

--DO YOU MIND IF
I SUGGEST A CHANGE
OF PLANS?

A
CHANGE?

IF
YOU DON'T
MIND!

A FRIEND OF MINE IS
GIVING A POETRY RECITAL
AT THE COMMONS'
HALL TONIGHT!

POETRY?

"TRUST ME! YOU'LL HAVE THE *TIME* OF YOUR LIFE!"

ABOUT
TIME!

THEY'RE
HERE!

IF I'D KNOWN WE WERE
TRAVELLING *ACROSS*
TOWN, I'D HAVE BROUGHT
ARCHIMEDES!

IF YOU
THINK WE NEED A
CHAPERONE,
WHY NOT GIVE A
HOLLER?

AWWWW, THAT'S NOT
WHAT I MEANT!

I KNOW,
SILLY!

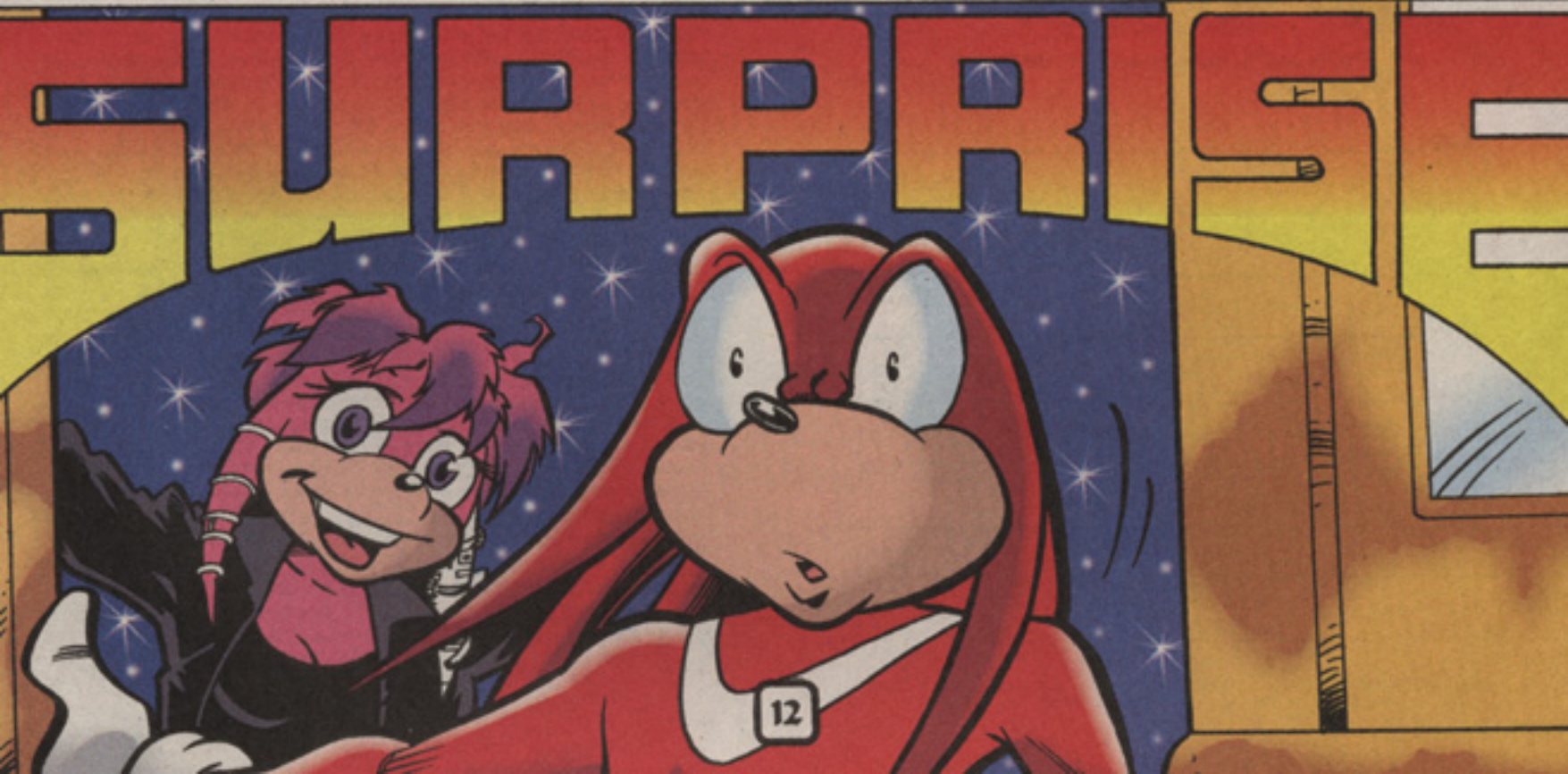
SO, WHERE IS
THIS BIG *SHINDIG*
GOING DOWN?

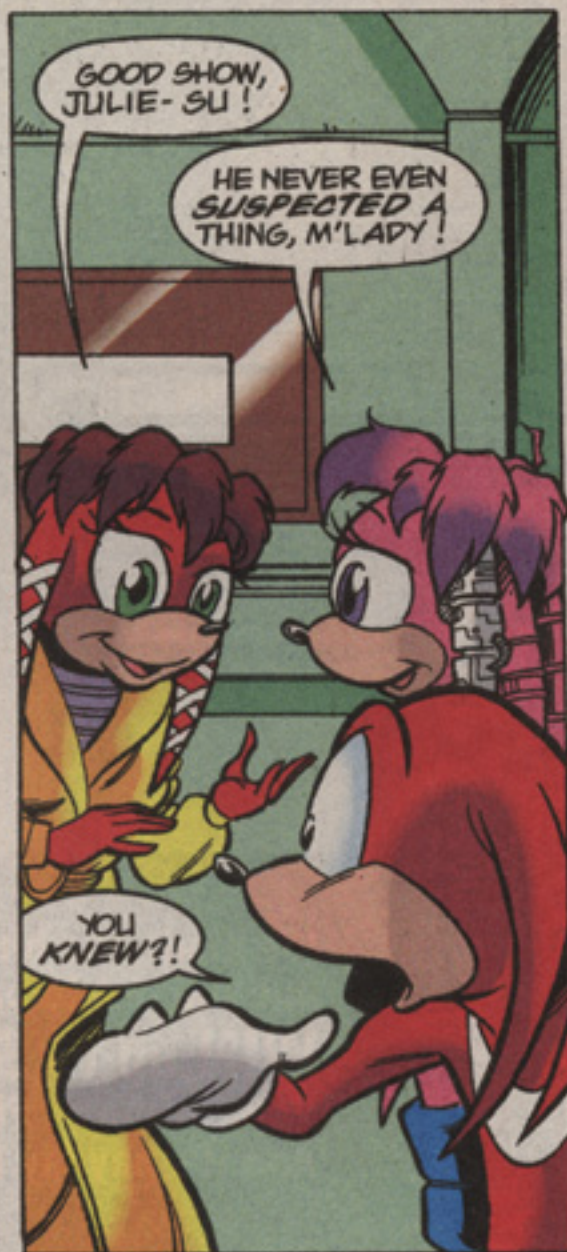
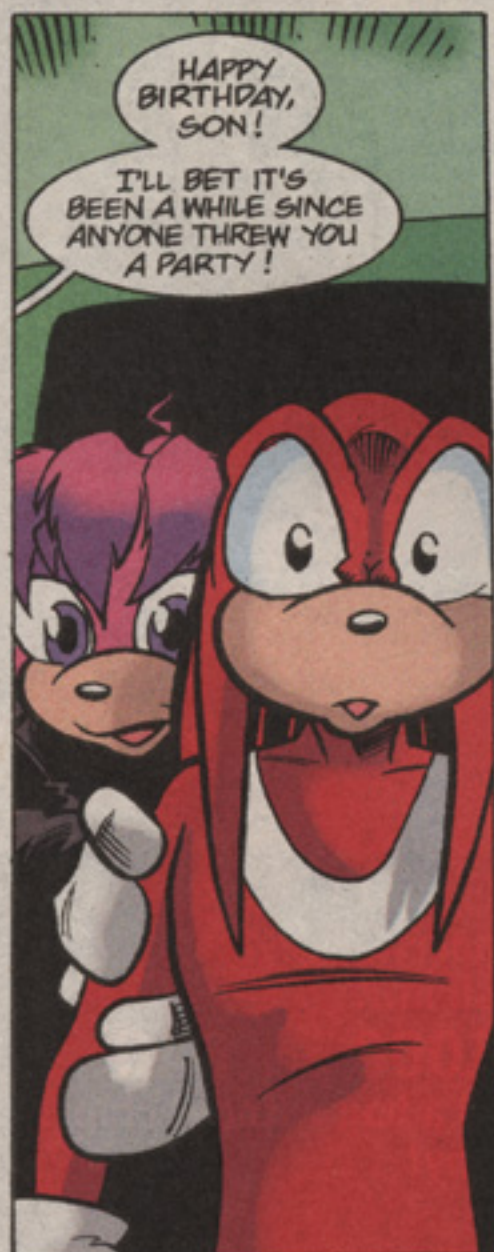
I TOLD
YOU--

--AT THE
COMMONS
HALL!

ARE YOU
SURE?

DOESN'T
STRIKE ME AS
THE KIND 'A
JOINT YOU'D
GO TO!







I THINK I
BETTER REJOIN MY
OWN PARTY!

IF YOU DON'T,
YOU MAY NOT HAVE A DANCE
PARTNER ANYMORE!

OUR
BOY IS
GROWING
UP,
LARA!

MUCH TOO
FAST, IF I MAY
SAY SO!

WE'LL
SEE
ABOUT
THAT!



AND I'LL PROBABLY
STILL FEEL THE SAME
YEARS FROM NOW!

EXCUSE ME--

--BUT I
WAS WONDERING
IF I COULD CUT
IN!

BUT OF COURSE,
GUARDIAN!

Y'KNOW, IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME
SINCE I LAST CELEBRATED ANYTHING
WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS--

--THAT YOU HAVE
NO IDEA HOW SPECIAL
THIS IS!

THIS IS
YOUR NIGHT,
KNUCKLES!

JUST RELAX AND
HAVE FUN!

BUT WHAT ABOUT
OUR DATE?

THERE'S ALWAYS
NEXT WEEKEND--
--WOULDN'T YOU
AGREE?



**IT'S A
DATE!**

SPEAKING OF DATES, WON'T
YOU JOIN US AND
KNUCKLES NEXT MONTH
AND LEARN ABOUT
"MY SPECIAL FRIEND."
IT'S NOT WHO YOU MAY THINK.

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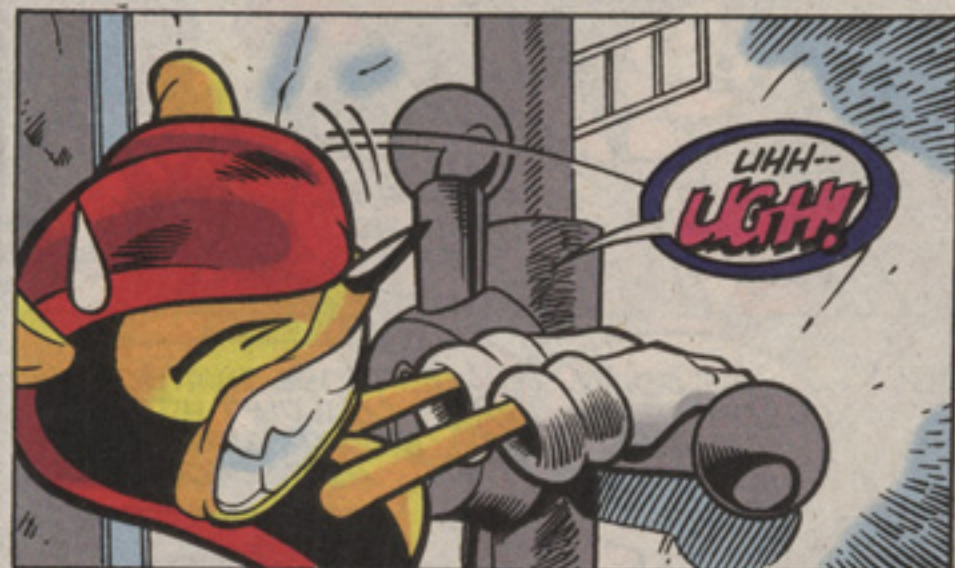
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LAST ISSUE, WE SAW
**MIGHTY
 THE
 ARMADILLO**
 STARING AT THE IMMENSE
 VAULT DOOR BEFORE HIM.



Writer: Ken Penders
 Penciler: Manny Galán
 (page 3 by Andrew Pepoy)
 Inker: Andrew Pepoy
 Colorist: Frank Gagliardo
 Letterer: Vickie Williams
 Editor: J.F. Gabriele





YOU MEAN YOU'VE BEEN HERE SINCE WE THOUGHT YOU DISAPPEARED ?!!

H-H-HAVE I REALLY BEEN GONE THAT LONG ?

S-S-SEEMS LIKE ONLY HOURS AGO WHEN YOU, SONIC AND I HEADED OVER TO ROBOTNIK'S LAB...

THERE'S FIONA, JUST LIKE I SAID, MIGHTY!

YOU LOOK FAMILIAR! HAVE WE MET ?

PERHAPS YOU'RE RELATED TO SIR CHARLES, ONE OF MY MORE LOYAL ROBOTIC MINIONS ?

UNFORTUNATELY, I NEED TO DEMONSTRATE TO ONE AND ALL WHAT HAPPENS TO ANY WHO OPPOSE MY WILL!

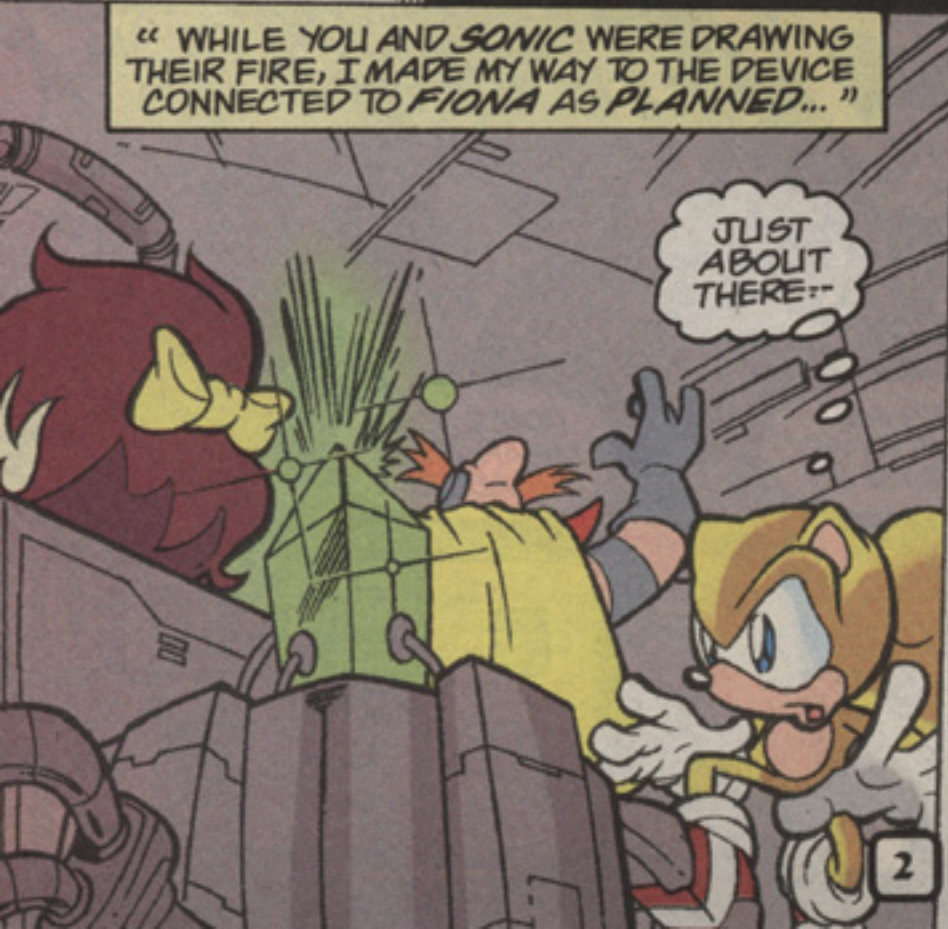
BLAST THEM!

GET DOWN, SONIC! MY SHELL WILL SHIELD US!

THOSE SWATBOTS COULDN'T HIT THE BROAD SIDE OF THIS HEDGEHOG!

ZZZ
ZZT!

ZZZ
ZZT!



" WHILE YOU AND SONIC WERE DRAWING THEIR FIRE, I MADE MY WAY TO THE DEVICE CONNECTED TO FIONA AS PLANNED..."

JUST ABOUT THERE:-



I GOT IT! I GOT THE POWER STONE!

" AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW-- "

ZZZAP!

"-- I WAS DOING A
DISAPPEARING ACT..."

HANG ON,
FRIEND!

THE LI'L
GUY NEEDS
US -- LIKE
NOW!

RAY!

GIVE IT
ALL YOU GOT!
I'M RIGHT WITH
YOU!

NOOO!
WE'RE TOO LATE!
WE'RE--

THEY'RE
GONE!

WHOA! WAS THAT TRIPPIN';
RAY, OR WHAT?

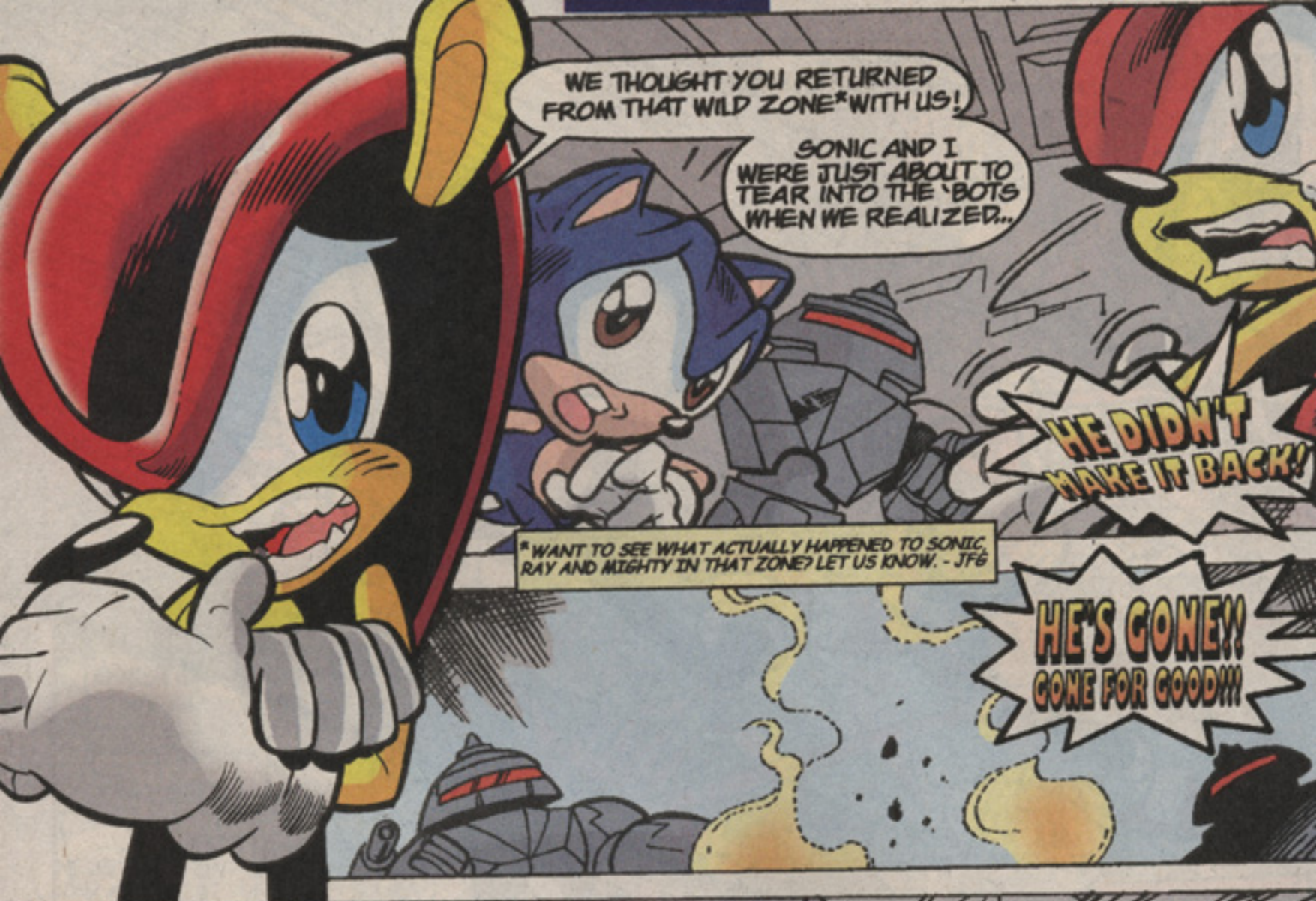
SOME SORT
OF DELAYED
REACTION, I
GUESS!

OOOH, I
SPOKE TOO
SOON!

I SURE
THOUGHT
SO!

WAITAMINUTE!
WHERE'S RAY ?!!!

YOU MEAN--
HE DIDN'T
COME THROUGH
THE ZONE
WITH US ?



WE THOUGHT YOU RETURNED FROM THAT WILD ZONE* WITH US!

SONIC AND I WERE JUST ABOUT TO TEAR INTO THE 'BOTS WHEN WE REALIZED...

HE DIDN'T MAKE IT BACK!

*WANT TO SEE WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED TO SONIC, RAY AND MIGHTY IN THAT ZONE? LET US KNOW. - JF6

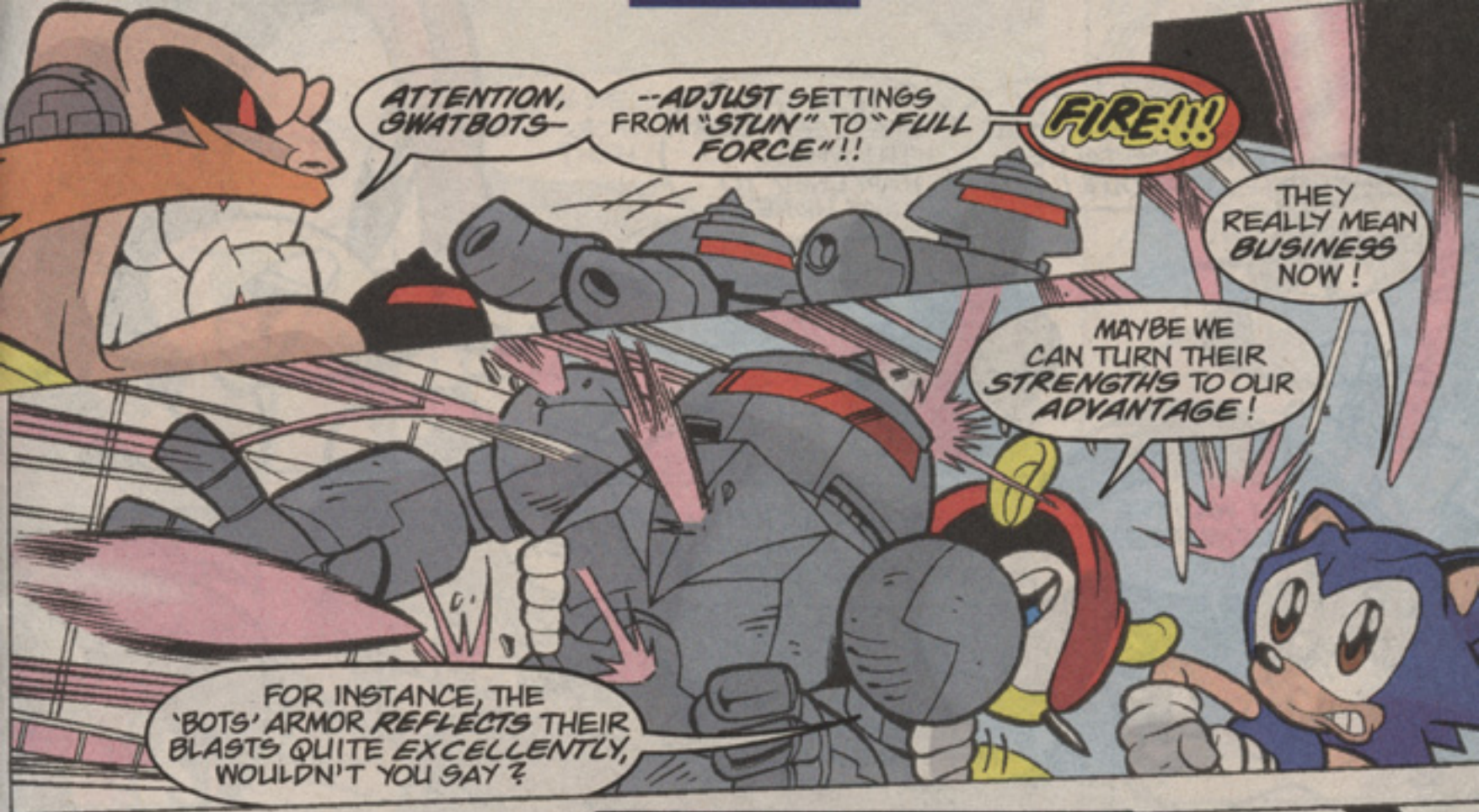
HE'S GONE!! GONE FOR GOOD!!!



Nooooooooooooo!!!

EGADS!

THAT OVERWROUGHT ORGANISM WILL DESTROY MY ENTIRE OPERATION UNLESS I DO SOMETHING FAST!



ATTENTION, SWATBOTS--

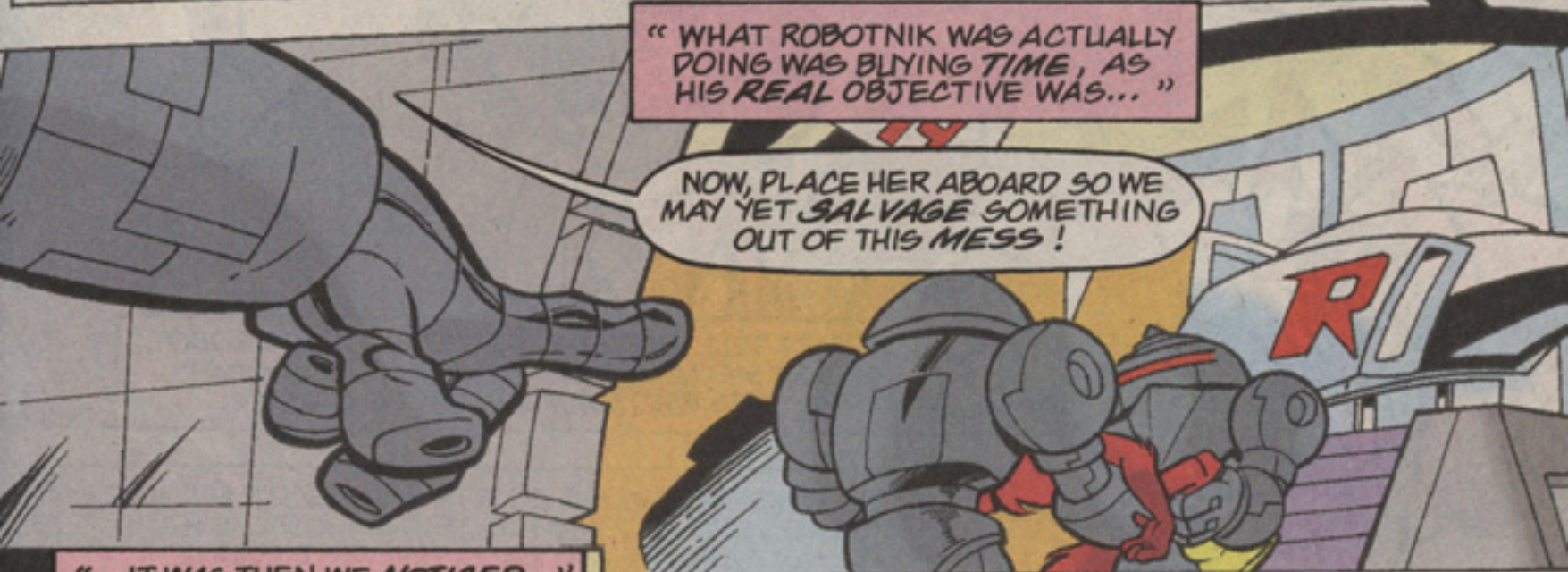
--ADJUST SETTINGS FROM "STUN" TO "FULL FORCE"!!

FIRE!!

THEY REALLY MEAN BUSINESS NOW!

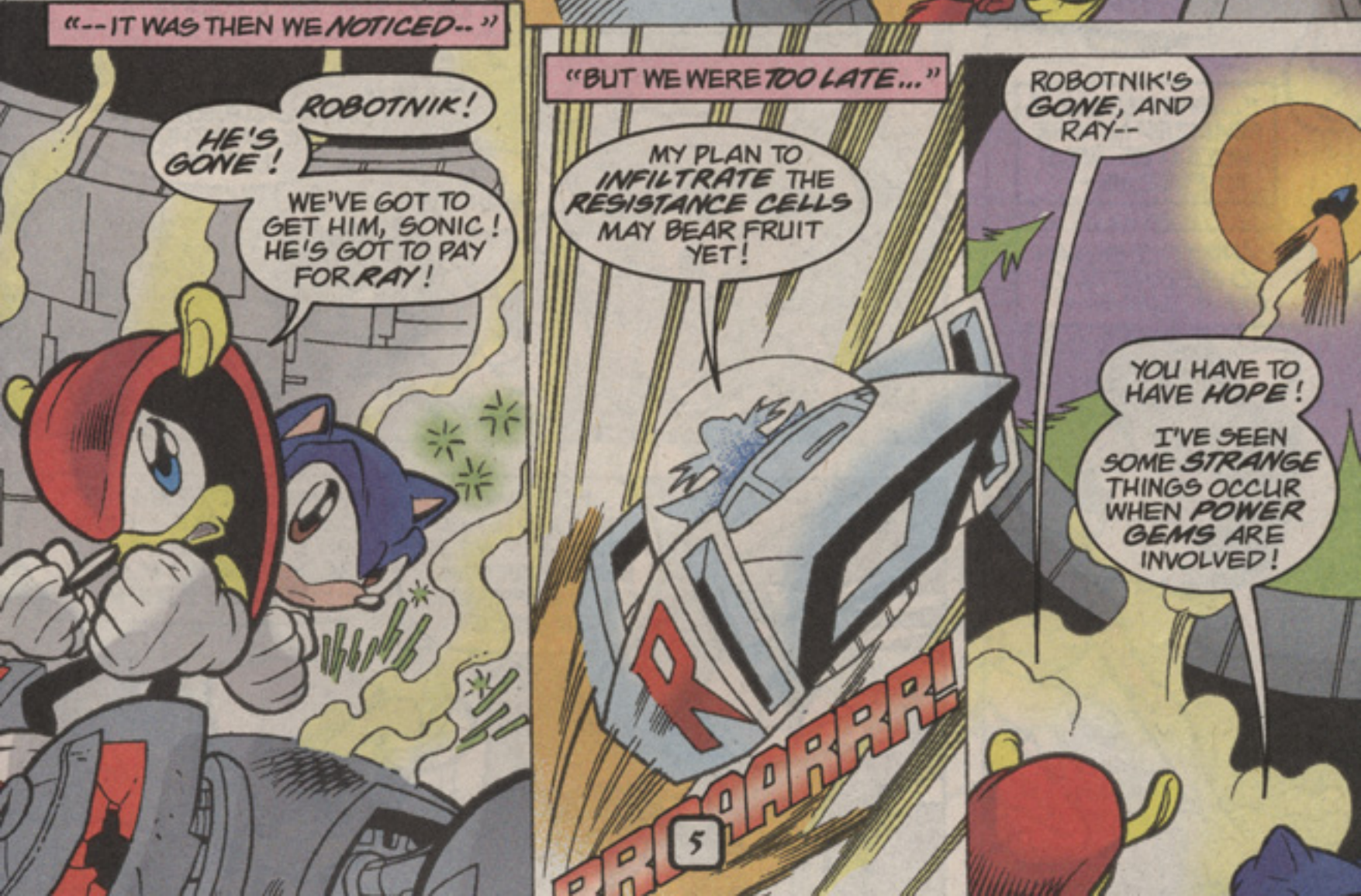
MAYBE WE CAN TURN THEIR STRENGTHS TO OUR ADVANTAGE!

FOR INSTANCE, THE 'BOTS' ARMOR REFLECTS THEIR BLASTS QUITE EXCELLENTLY, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?



"WHAT ROBOTNIK WAS ACTUALLY DOING WAS BUYING TIME, AS HIS REAL OBJECTIVE WAS..."

NOW, PLACE HER ABOARD SO WE MAY YET SALVAGE SOMETHING OUT OF THIS MESS!



"--IT WAS THEN WE NOTICED--"

ROBOTNIK!
HE'S GONE!

WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM, SONIC!
HE'S GOT TO PAY FOR RAY!

"BUT WE WERE TOO LATE..."

MY PLAN TO INFILTRATE THE RESISTANCE CELLS MAY BEAR FRUIT YET!

ROBOTNIK'S GONE, AND RAY--

YOU HAVE TO HAVE HOPE!

I'VE SEEN SOME STRANGE THINGS OCCUR WHEN POWER GEMS ARE INVOLVED!

APPARENTLY, SONIC KNEW WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT!

NOW THAT WE'RE SETTLED WITH WHAT HAPPENED TO RAY HERE--

--WHAT ABOUT YOU, FIONA?

IT WAS THE WEIRDEST THING.

WHEN ROBOTNIK RELOCATED TO ANOTHER LAB, HE MADE AN EXACT ROBOT DUPLICATE OF ME...

FIONA FOX, I GIVE YOU--

--FIONA FOX! PERFECT, ISN'T SHE?

"I COULDN'T TELL YOU WHAT HE DID WITH THE ROBOT,* BUT HE LEFT ME TO ROT IN A CELL, MY ONLY COMPANY BEING THE 'BOTS WHO MAINTAINED THE PLACE...

*BUT WE CAN CHECK OUT SONIC #28 & 29.
-JFG

"...EVENTUALLY, I REALIZED NO ONE WOULD BE ABLE TO FIND ME--

"-- AND SO I BEGAN TO SECRETLY DIG A TUNNEL.

"AFTER SEVERAL FALSE STARTS AND MUCH HARD WORK, OVER TWO LONG AND PAINFUL YEARS LATER, I HAD FINALLY CLAWED MY WAY OUT, WHERE I FOUND...

A WEASEL!

YOU'RE NOT SAFE SCAVENGING AROUND THESE PARTS!

OH, YEAH?

FOR ONCE, NIC LISTENED TO ME AND WE'VE BEEN EXISTING ON THE FRINGES EVER SINCE!

W-W-HILE I-I'M HAPPY FOR YOUR SAKE, F-FIONA, HAS EVERYONE F-F-FORGOTTEN I'M STILL B-BETWEEN ZONES?



HARDY--

--CONSIDERING
YOU'RE HANGING
ONTO WHAT I
WANT!



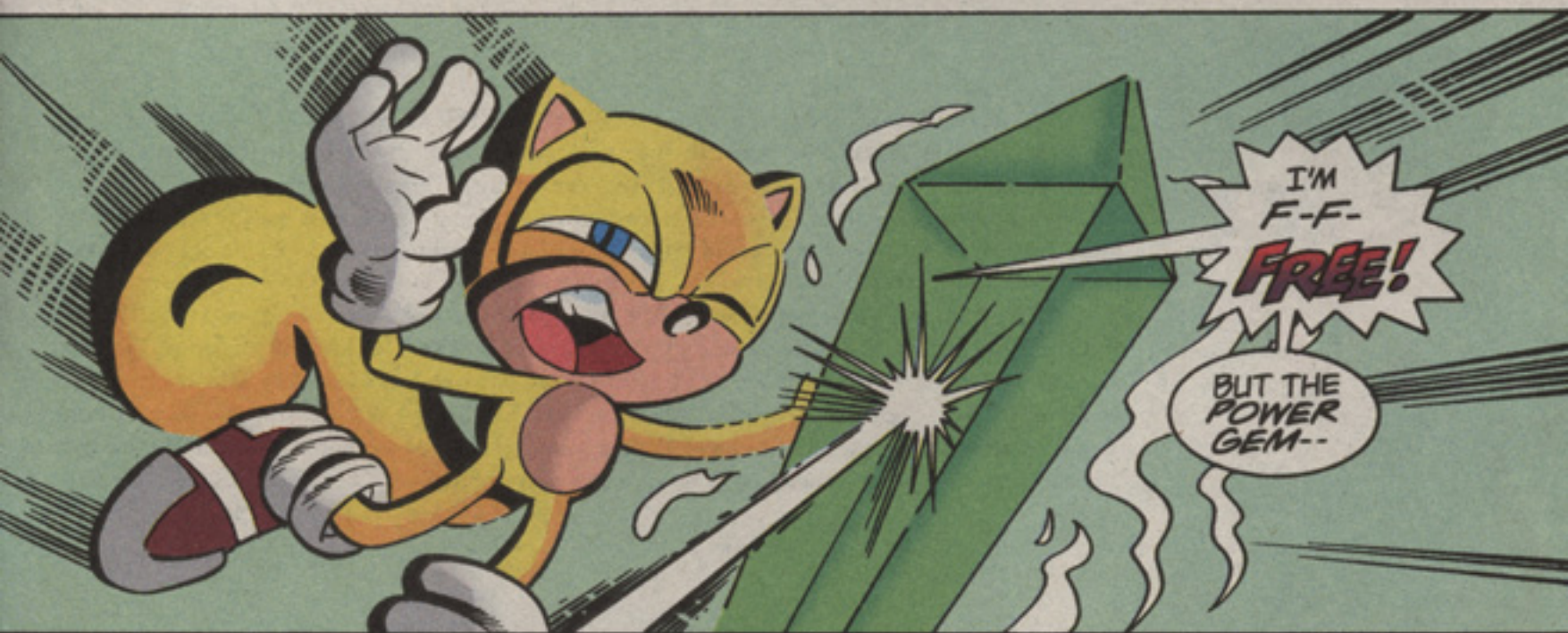
W-W-WELL, DO
S-S-SOMETHING,
THEN!

M-M-MIGHTY?



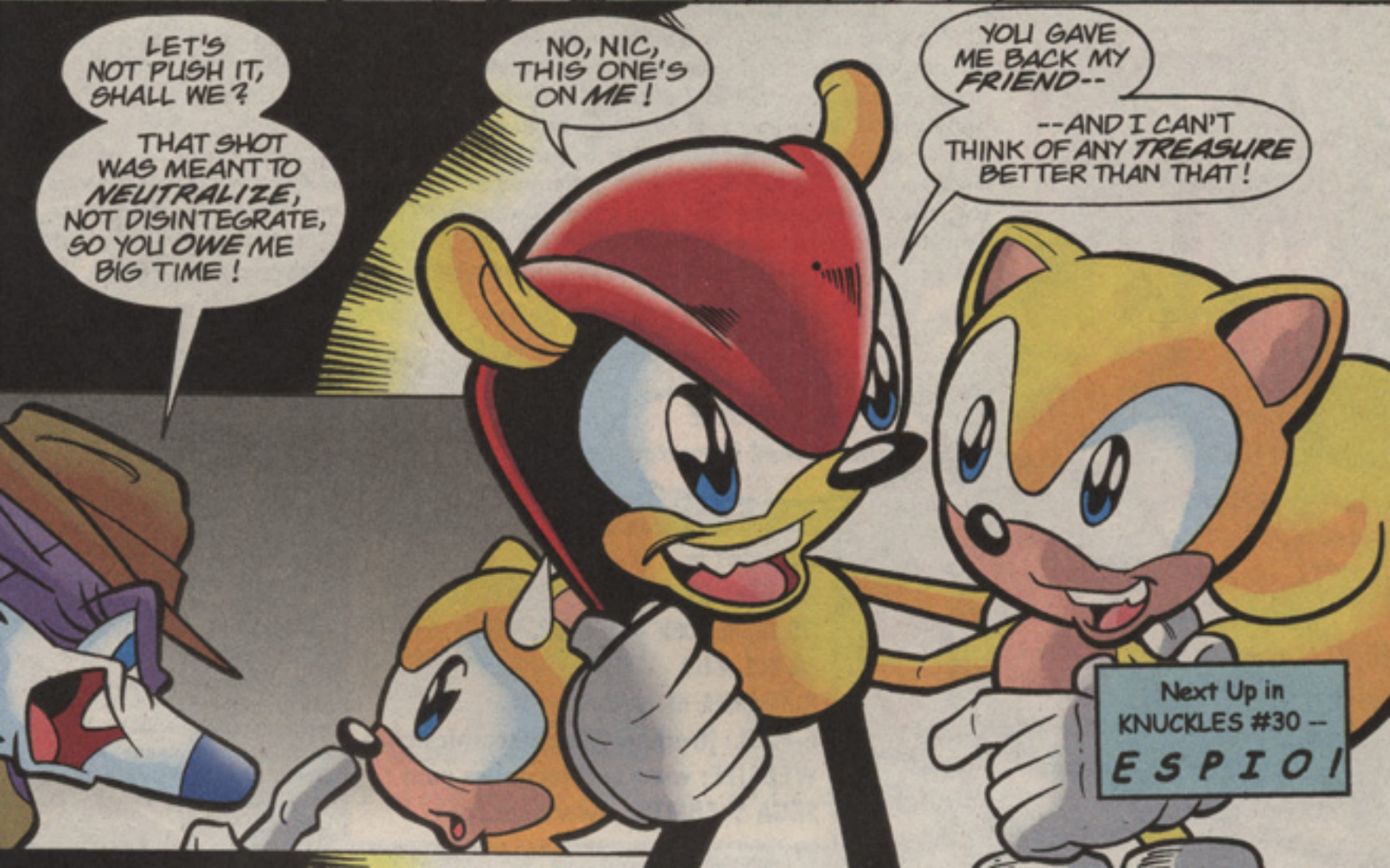
FORGET
HIM!

THIS
OUGHTTA
DO THE
TRICK!



I'M
F-F-
FREE!

BUT THE
POWER
GEM--



LET'S
NOT PUSH IT,
SHALL WE?

THAT SHOT
WAS MEANT TO
NEUTRALIZE,
NOT DISINTEGRATE,
SO YOU OWE ME
BIG TIME!

NO, NIC,
THIS ONE'S
ON ME!

YOU GAVE
ME BACK MY
FRIEND--

--AND I CAN'T
THINK OF ANY *TREASURE*
BETTER THAN THAT!

Next Up in
KNUCKLES #30 --
ESPIO!

FISTFUL

OF

LETTERS



OFF PANEL

by Gallagher, Manak & Amash

THIS JUST IN!

And now the return of Letter of the Month:

Hey Ya Rad Red.

The Dark Alliance series (KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #22-#24) was really good. In the storyline, everything was going well right up until Dimitri had Knuckles in the chamber and everything went nuts. I'm wondering what is so special about Knuckles that Dimitri's entire computer system burnt out. It seems to me that he might be more powerful than any of us thought him to be. It seems to me that sooner or later Sonic and The Freedom Fighters will have to face Dimitri and The Dark Legion. The Legion might be as dangerous as Robotnik ever was. They'll probably be a threat to the whole planet and not just to The Floating Island. Now to the questions: 1) Is Kommisar the daughter of Kragok? 2) How did Dimitri end up looking like a robot when in KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #9, he was seen as an old man after Mogul stole his powers? By the way, it was also good to see Harry the cab driver again who appeared in The Chaotix Caper (KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #13-#15).

James Santos (age 14)
Oxnard, CA.

Thanks for your letter, James. Now that you've read KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #25, you know that Knuckles was genetically enhanced and has powers far beyond any of the guardians before him. However, Knuckles never knew how to access that power since he didn't know he had those kind of abilities. In the coming months, Knuckles will continue to learn more about himself and his powers. You're also right about Dimitri and The Dark Legion. They don't want to conquer Mobius until The Floating Island is conquered first. They will do whatever it takes to make that happen. Now on to your questions: 1) They'll be more on the Kommisar and Kragok connection in SONIC SUPER SPECIAL #11. 2) Dimitri was dying of old age so The Dark Legion created a new cyborg body for him to continue to live.

Catch you on the flip side!

J.F. GABRIE
Editor / Art Director

Send letters to:

FISTFUL OF LETTERS #28

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Note: Due to the overwhelming amount of e-mail and snail mail, it is impossible for us to reply personally to each and every message. However, your opinions are important to us and each message will be read. Also, due to space limitations, some correspondence may be edited. Thanks for understanding!

Re: KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA
#24-

Hey Knux!!!

I was REALLY impressed with the Dark Vengeance storyline. The artwork by Jim Valentino rocks!! It was the best thing since the Sonic/Image crossover. Keep up the great work, and I think Jim should be a regular artist for Knuckles. Gotta juice, man!!

Josh Ernst

hedgehogman2@uno.com

Thank you.

Dear Knuckles:

How are you? I have so far read #1-#24 except #7, #8, & #9. I love your comic book. I think Julie-Su is pretty and that you picked the right girl!! I have a few questions: 1) Are you and Julie-Su more than just friends? 2) Will Julie-Su ever have her own mini-series? 3) Will Charmy ever reappear in the Chaotix team?, and 4) Will Vector and Julie-Su ever stop fighting?

Robert Fulton
Loveland, OH

If you're looking to complete your collection, you can order KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #7, #8, & #9 (Dark Vengeance) from the Sonic

Checklist on the last page of this issue. 1) Maybe. 2) You never know. 3) Only the future will answer that question for you. 4) Maybe not.

Dear J Freddy,

I just read Knuckles #24 and I must say that Jim Valentino did a really good job. Harvo also did a great job (as always). I hope we'll see him doing more guest inking. Now I have a question: If Julie-Su has the enhancements like her former team, how did she stay awake when they were all knocked out by Knuckles big explosion?

maxthefox17@yahoo.com

Julie-Su's enhancements are not as extensive as some of the other Legionnaires who depend on them for mobility.

Dear Knuckles Staff,

KNUCKLES #24 was awesome! I really liked the artwork, and the storyline was exciting. Lately, I think that most comics are just words and drawings mashed together, but the Knuckles comics are full of ideas and drawings that can actually be enjoyed because you know what's going on. I was wondering about something not really concerning Knuckles:

Could you at some time bring Rob O' The Hedge back for an appearance?

Chelan Bendickson
Puglvr111@aol.com

Anyone else want to see Rob O' The Hedge? Send in a letter and let us know.

Dear Editor,

I feel so excited about the upcoming KNUCKLES #25. I have some questions: 1) Does a guardian only have to be a male? 2) If it can be either male or female, why have you not shown a female guardian? Well, I hope to see a lot more of your good comic books.

Megan Chapma
Florence, AZ.

On the subject of a female guardian, you have already seen one. Janelle-li was a female guardian shown in KNUCKLES #11. Check it out.

Well, that's it for this month. Thank you all for your comments. See you in thirty. And remember...

KEEP COOL!

Cover by Patrick Spaziante and Ken Penders. Colors and separations by Darrin Moore and Heroic Age.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

In one week: In this issue-length nail-biter, Sonic and The Freedom Fighters find out just who has been playing the role of Dr. Robotnik all these many months and what he plans to do to them and all those who reside in the city of Mobotropolis. This special seventy-fifth anniversary issue is brought to you by Karl Bollers, Steven Butler and Pam Eklund.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG #75 on sale late July 1999!

Next Month: Guest-starring the ever-popular Princess Sally! Sally pays a visit to The Brotherhood of Guardians on The Floating



Island on a diplomatic mission on behalf of her father. Will her mission of mercy succeed or fail? Don't miss this issue-length epic! Check out "My Special Friend" written by Ken Penders with art by Art Mawhinney and Rich Koslowski.

KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #29 on sale early August 1999!

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